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Jim & Gretchen Rider
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Hi, Jim and Gretchen -

My USPS *Informed Delivery Daily Digest* service on 16 December forewarned with the image of a mysterious envelope soon to arrive at Stalgren Ct - from "Rider" but with an Aurora, IL return address. Say, what? This couldn't be 'my' Jim and Gretchen Rider, could it - we all knew they were safely ensconced in their Alabama home. And nobody moves from warm Alabama to cold Illinois in their 70s unless ... did that egotistical West Pointer Judge drive them out? Or was this another Rider, one I could not envision at this time? Perhaps it was some kind of diabolical trick, to get me to write a letter ... no, these folks are way too nice for diabolical tricks.

The next day's mail brought the actual missive, with a secular Christmas Card (also a first, I think) and a short but pithy message: "- from our new home in Illinois." The handwriting appeared to be Jim's but ... well, some ISIS operatives have been known to use surrogates to write their recruitment letters. Scan or no, I must write back, as I could not locate the last family letter I had received from the 'actual' Riders.

Perhaps I can get some answers. Meanwhile, I'm working away on my *Blackledge Stories* book. I'm not sure if I told you my son Doug died early in 2016, and this book will be my written memorial for Doug and his mother Helen - however, I want it to include memoirs, anecdotes, stories from friends and colleagues as well.

Jim, do you have any documents or good stories you would be willing to add about our time at AFA? Doug was born there, so I will have some stories of Helen and I and the parties that everyone hosted - including the one with "French 75s" or whatever where some folks were carried out by our colleagues, only to see the colleagues carried out in the next tag team. Jim, you ran the Math Dept for the Prep School as I recall, but you also taught at USAFA as well, yes? And I think I recall Becky playing the clarinet? And my favorite story of James was after he received a pedometer for Christmas, and we found him walking around, taking huge steps, and saying something like, "I can't believe my normal pace is so long!"

I'm hoping I will get some interesting stories to include in the book - but at least provide the story of how you are now in an apartment in Aurora, IL - I'm guessing that one of the kids, and/or several of the grandkids are in that area?

Once the holiday dust settles a bit, I would appreciate your insights, memories, and wisdom from the past – we were all the best and the brightest back then, yes?